

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 2, 3-4, 13, 17, 19,21-23,26-27,28-29 and 30-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C.103 (a) as being unpatentable over Onda et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,746,333 B1 in view of Stamper et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,820,265 B1 and further in view of Tajiri et al. ("Tajiri") U.S. Patent No. 6,482,092 B1.

3. Onda discloses a game mastery support apparatus, which supports mastery of an executable game. The game mastery support apparatus comprises a distribution device, which distributes mastery information, which advises a player how to master a game, to a terminal apparatus having a game execution function for executing the executable game independent of the mastery information (See Onda col. 3 lines 40-60; col. 5 lines 52-65; col. 10 lines 5-21; col. 13 lines 1-27). **The game mastery support apparatus and the terminal apparatus are different (fig 1, col 13 lines 21-35).**

4. **[claims 2, 4, 17, 18, 26-27,28-29 and 30-31]:** The distribution device distributes the mastery information according to information obtained from the terminal apparatus

(See Onda col. 6 lines 36-43). The mastery support apparatus and the terminal apparatus each comprise a processor (See Onda col. 1 lines 52-57; col. 13 lines 1-32)

5. *Onda further teaches the concept of distributing the mastery information according to a predetermined condition received from the terminal. Wherein the predetermined conditions could be mastery status information such as consecutive wins at a combat game or the stage/level cleared/finished by the player (Col 6 lines 59-64)*

6. *Although Onda teaches an embodiment wherein the terminal executing the game and the distribution device are not directly connected, Onda also teaches that a direct connection between the terminal and the distribution device is design choice (Col 13 lines 21-27).*

7. *Onda teaches the feature of providing, accumulating and storing mastery information to the player individually with the use of unique password strings such as an IP address (See col 7 lines 66 – col 8 line 4). The examiner notes that it is correct for one to conclude that anyone who somehow gains access to the password is able to access the specific mastery information stored and assigned to the password and thus the mastery information is not particularly for the original player in such situations. However, this situation is also true in regards to the applicant's invention. For example, take applicant's player identification 00000001 disclosed on applicant's page 4 paragraph 0079. Even though this identification was original assigned to a specific player, any other player who somehow gains access to this particular identification code also gains access to the mastery information stored and assigned to this code, thus the mastery information is not particular to the originally assigned player in such a situation.*

8. *However, if the applicant wants to further argue that this feature is not disclosed in Onda, the examiner brings forth Tajiri reference as part of the examination.*

9. *Tajiri teaches the concept of generating and storing helping data in the course of a game that helps the player in mastering the game. The data are stored and retrieved using a player's identification that is specifically disclosed as "player's ID". Thus the data are specific to the player in which the ID is assigned. Therefore the helping data assigned to such ID is specifically assigned to the player who owns the ID (Tajiri Abstract, Claim 1). Since Tajiri teaches that helping data are data that helps the user during the game, the examiner is viewing the mastery information as helping data since the mastery information helps the player during the course of the game.*

10. *It would have been obvious to someone of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate Onda's teachings in view of Tajiri's teachings so as to enable the player the ability of storing such mastery information for later use such as trading in such information with a fellow player in exchange for other mastery information. The motivation comes from Tajiri's Abstract where it teaches that player's can exchange helping data.*

11. **[claims 17, 18]:** The terminal apparatus includes a display screen, which displays the mastery information on the display screen (See Onda col. 13 lines 1-27).

12. **[claims 17, 18]:** The terminal processor receives, from the game mastery support apparatus, distributed mastery information, which advises a player how to master a game. The execution is conducted independent of the master information (See Onda col. 10 lines 5-31).

13. **[claim 19]:** Onda further discloses that the terminal apparatus comprises a first terminal device having a game execution function and a second terminal device displaying received mastery information within a display area. The first terminal device, which has the game execution function, sends the distribution condition if met, to the game mastery support apparatus. A second terminal device receives the information distributed by the game mastery support apparatus, which is specified as a destination of the mastery information. The second terminal device includes a display screen and a processing section receiving, from the game mastery support apparatus, the mastery information for mastering the game, and displaying the mastery information on the display screen (See Onda col. 5 lines 52-65; col. 9 lines 18-27; Fig. 1)

14. **[claim 23]:** Onda discloses a computer readable medium having recorded thereon a processing program for activating a game mastery support apparatus for supporting mastery of an executable game. The program includes a distributing routine for distributing mastery information, which advises a player how to master an executable multi-stage game, to a terminal apparatus having a game execution function. The function is independent of the mastery information (See Onda col. 4 lines 51-67.

15. **[claim 24]:** Onda discloses a method for distributing, via a communications network, game mastery information, which advises a player how to master a game, from a game mastery support apparatus to a terminal apparatus having a game execution function in accordance with a request from the terminal apparatus, the function is executable independent of the mastery information. The terminal stores user

information items including a game title, a user identifier and personal user information (See Onda col. 5 lines 50-67; col. 6 lines 1-67). The user information items are transmitted to the game mastery support apparatus. A processing section of the game mastery support apparatus retrieves mastery information corresponding to the received game title and distribution condition corresponding to the received game title. The distribution condition is stored to a mastery status management table of the game mastery support apparatus on a per-user-identified basis. The processing section of the game mastery support apparatus retrieves the game information items corresponding to the received game title from a game title data base group of the game master support apparatus. The processing section stores the received personal user information as a customer information database. Information corresponding to mastery status information on the game stage is distributed to the terminal apparatus (See Onda cols. 5-10)

16. **[claims 2, 17, 18, 23, 24, 26-27,28-29 and 30-32]:** Onda lacks in specifically disclosing that the game is a multi-stage game and that the distribution condition is a stage among multiple stages to which a player has proceeded.

17. Stamper teaches of a method of sharing data between video games in which the games are multi-stage games (See Stamper col. 4 line 61; col. 8 lines 35-57). In Stamper, a secondary memory device shares mastery status information to the terminal apparatus based on a stage among said multiple stages of the executable multi-stage game to which a player has proceeded (See Stamper col. 8 lines 35-57).

18. **[claim 2-3,30-32]:** For example, the sharing of hints on how to solve the game are based on the level in which a player has achieved in the game. Stamper further discloses that the master status information from the terminal apparatus includes flag information indicating a stage of the game to which the player has proceeded (See Stamper col. 4 lines 49-61) It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have the distribution condition in Onda be a stage that a player has achieved in a multi-stage game. Therefore, once a player satisfies the criteria of reaching a certain stage they have access to the information needed to pass the stage. (Now admitted prior art) The Examiner notes that it is well known throughout the art to download strategy guides over a network. Furthermore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to only allow access to those guides once a player has achieved the level necessary for which the strategy guides would be useful, thereby, only distributing the information to players who can use it or distributing the information as a reward for their efforts in the game thus far. By providing them access to the information, they will want to continue playing the game.

19. **[claims 13-16, 21, 22]:** Stamper further discloses that the terminal apparatus is a portable device (See Stamper col. 7 lines 19-22).

20. **[claim 25]:** Rarity added value information is distributed from host computer to the terminal apparatus of a higher-ranked user. An information distribution history is stored in the host computer, thereby customizing a delivery status for each user (See Lee Fig. 1, 7, 8). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to make the terminals of Onda portable so that a player could play games remotely and are not

restricted to a single location. The Examiner further notes that the fact that a claimed device is portable or movable is not sufficient by itself to patentably distinguish over an otherwise old device unless there are new or unexpected results. In re Lindberg, 194 F.2d 732, 93 USPQ 23 (CCPA 1952).

21. Claims 4-12, 14-16, 18, 20, 24-25, 27 and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Onda et al., in view of Stamper et al., in further view of Lee, U.S. Patent No. 6,475,089 B1.

22. **[claims 10-12]:** Onda and Stamper disclose all of the limitations mentioned above. Onda further discloses that the terminal apparatus comprises a first terminal device having a game execution function and a second terminal device displaying received mastery information within a display area (See Onda col. 5 lines 52-65; Fig. 1). In Stamper, a receiver, receives from the first terminal device, mastery status information representing a game stage to be mastered (See Stamper col. 8 lines 36-57). In Onda, a distributing device, distributes to the second terminal device specified as a destination, the mastery information according to the mastery status information from the first terminal device (See Onda col. 5 lines 50-65; col. 10 lines 5-21; col. 12 lines 40-45).

23. **[claims 4-6; 18, 20,27,29]:** Onda and Stamper lack in disclosing distributing ranking information. Lee teaches of a game system in which a ranking information distribution device, distributes ranking information pertaining to a rank of a player in a game (See Lee col. 1 lines 38-41; col. 8 lines 22-38)

24. **[claims 4, 20,27,29]:** The system of Lee furthermore will distribute game information on the basis of the ranking of a player (See Lee col. 8 lines 16-44) For example, the system will only distribute game and opponent information if the rankings of a player and an opponent are similar. Lee further teaches of an accumulator, which accumulates information from the terminal apparatus for each player's identifier.

25. **[claims 7-91]:** A determining device then determines a rank of a corresponding user with reference to the accumulated information. A distributor then distributes ranking information pertaining to the determined rank (See Lee col. 8 lines 23-44).

26. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to distribute the mastery information in Onda on the basis of the ranking of a player [claims 4,27,29]. Onda clearly states that it distributes mastery information on the basis of a predetermined condition being met; it is obvious that the predetermined condition could be the ranking of a player; therefore the players with higher ranks are being rewarded with access to the hints and other information in the game. Furthermore, as previously stated, it is obvious to only distribute the hints to the players that need them which may be determined based on the rank of a player. Therefore, one is not distributing difficult game information to a player who could not perform it based on his rank; the information is being distributed only to the players who need it.

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments filed 09/04/07 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

2. On page 14, applicant argues, Onda does not disclose “the mastery status information obtained from the terminal device is accumulated and stored in the distribution device.”

27. The examiner respectfully disagrees. Again, as illustrated above, *Onda teaches the feature of providing, accumulating and storing mastery information to the player individually with the use of unique password strings such as an IP address (See col 7 lines 66 – col 8 line 4). The examiner notes that it is correct for one to conclude that anyone who somehow gains access to the password is able to access the specific mastery information stored and assigned to the password and thus the mastery information is not particularly for the original player in such situations. However, this situation is also true in regards to the applicant’s invention. For example, take applicant’s player identification 00000001 disclosed on applicant’s page 4 paragraph 0079. Even though this identification was original assigned to a specific player, any other player who somehow gains access to this particular identification code also gains access to the mastery information stored and assigned to this code, thus the mastery information is not particular to the originally assigned player in such a situation.*

28. *However, to further persecution, the examiner brought forth Tajiri reference as part of the examination in the previous office action dated 06/04/07.*

29. *What Tajiri teaches is the concept of generating and storing helping data in the course of a game that helps the player in mastering the game. The data are stored and retrieved using a player’s identification that is specifically disclosed as “player’s ID”. Thus the data are specific to the player in which the ID is assigned. Therefore the*

Art Unit: 3714

helping data assigned to such ID is specifically assigned to the player who owns the ID (Tajiri Abstract, Claim 1). Since Tajiri teaches that helping data are data that helps the user during the game, the examiner is viewing the mastery information as helping data since the mastery information helps the player during the course of the game.

3. *It would have been obvious to someone of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate Onda's teachings in view of Tajiri's teachings so as to enable the player the ability of storing such mastery information for later use such as trading in such information with a fellow player in exchange for other mastery information. The motivation comes from Tajiri's Abstract where it teaches that player's can exchange helping data.*

4. On page 14, applicant argues, Onda does not disclose "the mastery status information indicates for a player individually on the basis of information for such player concerning a stage to which a player has proceeded". Once again, please see Onda col. 4 lines 1-8 and 51-67 and also paragraphs 16-18 above.

5. On pages 15-16, applicant argues, Tajiri does not disclose "a game device B (alleged distribution device) that **distributes the mastery information** according to mastery status information, which is obtained from the game device A (alleged terminal apparatus), wherein the mastery status information obtained from the terminal device is accumulated and stored in the distribution device, and indicates for a player individually.

6. However, the examiner is not relying on Tajiri for the distribution feature of the claimed invention. Tajiri was merely brought in to show that accumulating and storing game helping/mastery information is old in the gaming art. Please see paragraphs 9-10 above.

7. On pages 16-17, applicant argues, “the users cannot gain access to the game-specific data until they received the password. However, according to the claimed invention, a player can obtain the mastery support information whenever the player wishes even right after the initiation of the game.”

8. The examiner agrees that the user cannot gain access to the game specific data until an access data is giving to the player because the game specific data is distributed to the player based on the access data. However, this is also true for the claimed invention. In the applicants’ invention, the player cannot access the game specific data until the playerID is assigned to the player *page 4 paragraph 0079*.

Response to Arguments

9. Applicant’s arguments filed 02/21/08 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

10. On pages 14-15, in regards to claim 2, applicant argues, “Applicants respectfully submit that Stamper discloses a single system that has a processor and memory; it does not disclose a terminal device and a distribution device as recited in claim 2. Moreover, the processor executes a first program and stores information pertaining to the programs in memory and retrieves the stored information from memory when executing a second program. However, Stamper does not disclose obtaining mastery status information from the terminal device and accumulating and storing the information on a distribution device. That is, Stamper merely discloses that the information pertaining to a first program is stored in the memory of the same device; it does not disclose mastery status information being obtained from a first device (terminal device) and being accumulated and stored in a second device (distribution device). Specifically, in column 8, lines 35-57, Stamper discloses that a player must recognize from the hint that the door to access is found in the second video game, and thus, this hint requires the player recall playing the secondary video game. Moreover, if the user wants to use this hint

found in the second video game he also has to reach a certain level in the current game. (column 8, lines 48-53). Therefore, Stamper merely discloses hints from a second game can be used in a current program, if a certain level was reached in the current game; it does not disclose anything about accumulating and storing mastery status information in the distribution device that was obtained from the terminal device. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully submit that Stamper discloses a single processor in the game system; it does not disclose a game mastery support apparatus and a terminal apparatus each comprising a processor. Also, Stamper does not disclose that the terminal apparatus from which the mastery information is obtained from and the game mastery support apparatus which comprises the distribution device, which accumulates and stores the mastery status information, are different.”

11. However, the examiner is relying on Stamper for its teaching of the master status information from the gaming system. Stamper teaches that the status information includes flag information indicating a stage of the game to which the player has proceeded (See Stamper col. 4 lines 49-61). In light of Stamper’s teachings, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have the distribution condition in Onda include a stage that a player has achieved in a multi-stage game. Therefore, once a player satisfies the criteria of reaching a certain stage they have access to the information needed to pass the stage.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Emmanuel Omotosho whose telephone number is (571) 272-3106. The examiner can normally be reached on m-f 10-6.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner’s supervisor, Robert Pezzuto can be reached on (571) 272-6996. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 3714

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

EO

/Ronald Laneau/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3714
06/06/08